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REMEMBERING D-DAY: A 70TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

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June 6, 1944: D-Day — the most massive amphibious assault ever mounted on an enemy; the linchpin upon which the fate of the free world hinged. Its impact spanning two centuries changed the world — a world that could be so different today had D-Day not succeeded.

D-Day: "We'll go," Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower declared.

And go they did. Many never came back.

Among them, 13 of our own — Ohio State students, faculty, alumni — are buried on a bluff overlooking Omaha beach at the American Cemetery at Normandy where the endless rows of pristine white crosses bear silent witness to what went on below.

To honor the memory of the valor and loss of this singular day in history, The Ohio State University, College of Arts and Sciences and Department of History hosted a **two-day 70th anniversary commemoration** on Thursday, June 5, and Friday, June 6. **Recordings of conference sessions** are available on Ohio State History Department channel YouTube.

"We started planning the 'Remembering D-Day: a 70th Anniversary Commemoration,' last fall," History Department Chair and Mershon Center affiliate **Peter Hahn** said. "The idea was first proposed by one of our distinguished scholars of military history and winner of the Heineken Prize, Professor **Geoffrey Parker**.

"It has been long, hard work, but ultimately extremely satisfying," Hahn said. "The other planning team members, including Professor **Pete Mansoor**, Graduate Research Associate Sarah Douglas, my executive assistant Kristina Ward and myself agreed that this was something that had to be done."

With support from College of Arts and Sciences development and communications, the team rolled-up its sleeves and said, "We'll go."

The payoffs of their labor of love are at hand. Ohio State's two-day tribute and memorial, **Remembering D-Day: a 70th Anniversary Commemoration**, began June 5 with a reception and keynote address by History Professor Emeritus and Potomac Institute Academic Program Fellow **Williamson Murray** on "The Eve of D-Day: Possibilities and Roads Not Taken." It ended with a veterans panel and reception on D-Day itself, June 6.


Between Murray and the veterans panel, some of the country's finest military historians and scholars discussed the significance of this day from a variety of perspectives.

Hahn, a scholar of diplomatic history, offered an inside look at "Setting the International Stage for Invasion: The Diplomatic Underpinnings of the Grand Alliance."

Peter Mansoor, General Raymond E. Mason Jr. Chair in Military History and U.S. Army Colonel (Ret.), a military historian, who as a "boots-on-the-ground" army officer also helped make military history, provided an in-depth examination of "The Longest Day: The Allied Invasion of Normandy."

History Department PhD alumnus Russell Hart, professor of history, chair of the Department of History, and program chair for diplomacy and military studies at Hawaii Pacific University, and an expert on World War II, gave a lecture on "Invasion They Are Coming! Legends of the German Defense of Normandy Seventy Years On."

The veterans panel, chaired by former Columbus mayor, Ohio State football player and Vietnam veteran Greg Lashutka, was "a



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unique opportunity — one that is rapidly vanishing — to hear from men who fought in World War II in both the European and Pacific theaters," Hahn said.

Among the three veteran speakers is one who survived D-Day. He also is one of Ohio State's own; now director emeritus of the Ohio Union. In 1944, Wendell Ellenwood, an Ohio State undergraduate from Jackson County, landed at Utah Beach and served on the front lines for the duration of the war, fighting in the iconic Battle of the Bulge. For his service, he received the Purple Heart, Bronze Star with a V (for Valor), Air Medal, French Croix De Guerre, and French Liberation Medal. After the war, Ellenwood returned to Ohio State and served as the director of the Ohio Union for 25 years.


Donald Dunn, born in Pittsburgh, trained with the 10th Mountain Division in Camp Hale, Colo., and Texas, before deploying to Italy with Company G, 86th Mountain Infantry in December 1944. Staff Sgt. Dunn was awarded the Combat Infantrymen's Badge for his first major combat action in March 1945, near the village of Iola and was wounded while leading the men of his infantry platoon during the final offensive in Italy in April 1945. He received the Silver Star and Purple Heart.

Jim Baize, a native of Indianapolis, enlisted in the U.S. Navy at 15 and wound up serving in the intense Pacific theater. At 16, he was assigned to the USS Fremont participating in battles on the Japanese-held islands of Saipan, Tinian and Guam. His duties included ferrying troops and supplies safely to and from ship during battle. Baize was wounded more than once under substantial fire from the hills that concealed the Japanese positions. Baize also saw action on Iwo Jima and received two Purple Hearts.

"There seems to be no better way to end this two-day commemoration than by hearing these stories from representatives of 'The Greatest Generation,'" Hahn said.

-- Written by Sandi Rutkowski, College of Arts and Sciences, rutkowski.1@osu.edu

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